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TAGS: [ECIN](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [UNGA](#)

SUBJECT: UNGA 62 GENERAL DEBATE: SECURITY COUNCIL REFORM,
IRAN, IRAQ, THE MIDDLE EAST AND MORE

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SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED; PROTECT ACCORDINGLY.

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Representatives from 191 member states spoke during the General Debate of the 62nd United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) from September 25 through October 3, 2007 and covered many themes in common. On Security Council Reform, many countries called for a more representative Council and suggested several candidates for membership, most frequently Japan, Germany and India. Regarding Iran, leaders from Germany, France, UK and Japan took strong stands against Iran's nuclear activities, while Iran claimed it had fulfilled its IAEA obligations. On Iraq, many leaders acknowledged the importance of a stable Iraq to the region and supported the ongoing reconstruction and reconciliation, but several criticized U.S. policy in Iraq. Regarding the Israel-Palestinian conflict, most countries encouraged dialogue and reacted positively to the upcoming U.S.-proposed peace conference. As events in Burma unfolded, member-states expressed support for democratization and called on Burma to end the use of excessive force, while Burma's Foreign Minister claimed Burma was a victim of a campaign to destabilize the country, which he said has since returned to normalcy. On Kosovo, European leaders supported UN Envoy Ahtissari's work; Serbia, however, predictably expressed concern over what it called violations of its territorial integrity. Discussion on trade focused on inequitable practices and calls for a successful conclusion of the Doha negotiations, and nearly every leader gave ideas on climate change. End Summary.

¶2. (U) This year's General Debate of the United Nations General Assembly took place over the period September 25 to October 3 and featured 191 presentations, 70 delivered by

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heads of state. USUN summarizes significant comments on major themes. Positive and negative comments on U.S. policies will be reported septel. Copies of all speeches may be viewed at <http://www.un.org/webcast/ga/62/>.

Reform of the Security Council

¶3. (U) Discussion of UN reform concentrated primarily on ideas for modifying the composition of permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council. There was broad support among developing and developed states alike for increasing the size of the Council, and in particular, increasing the number of permanent member seats. Many nations argued that changes to the Council were needed to better reflect the realities of today's world and to improve the effectiveness and legitimacy of the Council.

¶4. (SBU) Among European states, Germany announced its own readiness to become a permanent member; Slovakia lent support to Germany and Japan. Spain, France and Russia made no reference to Security Council reform at all. The UK would support permanent seats for Germany, Japan, India, Brazil and an African nation; however, the UK was not wedded to a single model of reform. Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi said that Italy was opposed to any model of Security Council reform calling for the expansion of permanent members. Japan voiced support for expanding the Council and increasing the body's effectiveness, but made no pronouncement about its own readiness to become a permanent member.

¶5. (SBU) Most African nations expressed dissatisfaction with

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the Security Council status quo, suggesting that reform is needed to better reflect today's geopolitics. South Africa criticized the UN, saying it is "difficult to demonstrate decisive progress" because the UN "has not itself transformed and designed the necessary institutions of governance

consistent with noble ideals." Gambia and Zambia expressed support for the Ezulwini Consensus, which proposes two permanent and five non-permanent seats for Africa on the Security Council.

2008 - 2009 Security Council Elections

¶6. (U) Eight countries are competing for the five non-permanent Council seats up for election on October 16. Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic will compete for the seat occupied by Peru; Croatia and the Czech Republic will compete for Slovakia's seat. Libya and Burkina Faso will run uncontested for the two Africa seats, currently held by Congo and Ghana. Vietnam will run uncontested to replace Qatar.

¶7. (SBU) In a preview of what might be expected during a Libyan term on the Security Council, Foreign Minister Mohamed Shalgham spoke at length about a need to put UN decision-making power in the hands of all UN members. Shalgham said the Council should become a tool to implement General Assembly resolutions, adding, "we will overcome the obstacles caused by the veto, which puts international decision-making in the hands of the permanent members of the Security Council and entrenches the resort to a selective approach and double standards in dealing with international problems." Libya called for a permanent seat to be given to

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the African Union and for five non-permanent and two permanent seats to be given to African states. To achieve all this, Libya called for a UN high-level summit meeting in Geneva during the 63rd General Assembly dedicated to the reform process and expansion of the Security Council.

Tough Talk To and From Iran

¶8. (SBU) European leaders sent a strong message to the UNGA on Iran, with German Chancellor Angela Merkel telling governments not to fool themselves about the disastrous consequences that would result if Iran acquired a nuclear weapon, adding, "the world does not have to prove to Iran that Iran is not building a nuclear bomb." She cautioned that there should be no doubt as to the dangerous nature of Iran's nuclear program, which contradicts the demands of the IAEA and UN, ignores the UN Security Council and is "blatantly threatening Israel." Merkel said that Israel's security was "non-negotiable" for Germany and added that Germany favored a diplomatic solution, but warned that if Iran does not respond to diplomacy, Germany would favor harsher sanctions. France said that a nuclear Iran is an unacceptable risk to regional and global stability and the United Kingdom called on Iran to cease its support for terrorist groups and its defiance of three Security Council resolutions on its nuclear program. Japan also called for Iran to suspend its enrichment-related activities. Russia said urgent steps were needed to strengthen the non-proliferation regime, but defended the right of states to access the benefits of peaceful nuclear energy. China also defended the right to civilian nuclear technology and called

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for diplomacy to solve the Iranian issue peacefully. Israel called Iran a "radical regime" and blamed it for causing trouble in Iraq, Palestine, and Lebanon.

¶9. (U) Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad retorted that Iran has been very cooperative, transparent, and fulfilled its obligations under the IAEA, adding that Iran has spared no effort to build confidence only to be deprived of its rights. Ahmedinejad said that the nuclear issue is now

closed but Iran will always be willing to talk.

Concern Over Security and Development in Iraq

¶10. (SBU) The ongoing security situation in Iraq was a concern raised by most member states. Generally, nations were supportive of efforts for national reconciliation and reconstruction. Iraq stated it is fighting to keep its young democracy, and that this "New Iraq" is what the terrorists are targeting. Speakers acknowledged the detrimental effect an unstable Iraq would have on the entire Middle East. Several states -- including Qatar, Oman, Libya, and Kuwait -- called on the broader international community to step up efforts, as Iraq should not, as Qatar put it, "remain confined to one State or an alliance of States of converging interests." These states considered the UN's new expanded involvement on Iraq a positive step. The United Kingdom called for ongoing support for the development of Iraqi security forces. A small number of states, including Yemen, expressed support for non-interference in Iraq's internal affairs and Syria called for "withdrawal of all foreign forces in Iraq because this measure will contribute to

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curbing the violence." Pakistan stated the importance of preserving Iraq's territorial integrity. However, several nations used the subject of Iraq as an opportunity to criticize the United States. President Ortega of Nicaragua referred to the war in Iraq as "a war imposed by Empire in the economic and oil interests of the Empire." Malaysia attributed many of Iraq's current problems to foreign occupation and argued that Iraq should be given the opportunity to determine its own future. Iran joined the criticism, accusing the U.S. of not having the courage to "declare defeat and exit Iraq."

Israel-Palestinian Conflict: Positive reactions to
U.S. peace conference

¶11. (SBU) Most countries called for solving the Israel-Palestinian conflict through dialogue, the Roadmap, and the Quartet's plans, with the result being a two-state solution. Many states reacted positively to the U.S. initiative to convene a peace conference in November. Jordan said that the Palestinian question is at the heart of the Middle East crises, and "the region will be swept into extremism and anarchy if the Palestinian issue is not solved." Malaysia said, "Palestine is the single most important issue in the way of peace and fraternity between Islamic and Western countries." A recurrent theme among Arab states was for the international community to "observe international and humanitarian law," including limiting Israel to its pre-1967 borders, affirming the right of return for Palestinian refugees and designating Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine. Syria asked whether Israel or

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Americans still have the will to make genuine peace, when "actions and realities suggest otherwise."

¶12. (SBU) Israel said extremists are entering democratic institutions in the Islamic world in order to strengthen their non-democratic agenda, especially regarding religion and education, and said Hamas and Hizbollah must choose between violence and legitimacy. Israel criticized the Human Rights Council for its "wildly disproportionate focus on Israel" and called for Arab and Muslim states to assist any new Palestinian state economically and politically. The Palestinian Observer called for mutual understanding and dialogue and said that "the defense of Islam, the religion of

moderation, love, and human brotherhood, falls on the shoulders" of the "vital and responsible forces in the Middle East that represent the conscience of its peoples and their desire for liberty, progress, and democracy."

Regional Crises: Burma, Kosovo

¶13. (U) Thailand, the Philippines, and Malaysia criticized the use of excessive force in Burma, urged Burmese leaders to move towards democracy, and called for the release of activist Aung San Suu Kyi. Burma neighbors India, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia did not mention Burma in their speeches. Mauritius applauded President Bush's decision to impose sanctions on Burma and Georgia's President Saakashvili called for support of "Myanmar's Saffron Revolution for its inevitable march of liberty," which he said echoed the Rose and Orange revolutions. Burmese Foreign Minister U Nyan Win told the UNGA on October 1 that his country is being

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subjected to a neo-colonialist attempt to spread disinformation, impose sanctions, and create unrest with an aim to invade, causing conflict and suffering for his people. He said "political opportunists" had taken advantage of a small protest by Buddhist monks to create "a political showdown aided and abetted by some powerful countries." He concluded that "normalcy has now returned in Myanmar."

¶14. (U) The future status of Kosovo also received significant attention in the General Debate. Albania gave a long presentation in support of Kosovo independence and self-determination and tried to downplay concerns that Albania's support was tied to an effort to create a "greater Albania," calling such concerns xenophobic. Serbia exercised the right of reply by giving prepared remarks arguing that by advocating for the independence for Kosovo, Albania was calling for the violation of Serbia's territorial integrity and sovereignty. German Chancellor Merkel, echoing the view of EU countries, called for more active EU and NATO roles and hailed the work of UN Special Envoy Ahtissaari. However, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov underlined the Russian view that a "unilateral" approach to the crisis would not contribute to a lasting peace.

Need to Push Ahead with the Doha Round

¶15. (U) General Debate discussion of trade issues centered on unfair trade practices as perceived by developing states and on bringing the Doha Round to an early, successful conclusion. Leaders of developing nations argued that a more equitable trade system would bolster sustainable development

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efforts, access to renewable energy resources and access to markets. There was general support among delegates to push ahead with the Doha Round and conclude negotiations as quickly as possible. German Chancellor Merkel, voicing the general sentiment of EU countries, called for talks to concentrate on improving transparency in financial markets, guaranteeing intellectual property rights and establishing minimum social and legal standards for trade. Developing countries such as Brazil, Ghana, Honduras and the Dominican Republic criticized farm subsidies in developed nations, especially in the EU, and endorsed Doha as a chance to correct what they view as a system that perpetuates poverty and severely disadvantages developing nation economies.

Seeking a post-2012 climate agreement by 2009

¶16. (U) Leaders enthusiastically praised SYG Ban's September 24 High-Level Event on Climate Change and made similar remarks regarding the adaptation, mitigation, technology and financing efforts needed to address this problem. Major themes throughout included: favoring common but differentiated responsibilities for mitigation measures between developed and developing nations; paying attention immediately to the most vulnerable nations-mainly Small Island Developing States and Africa-that are the most affected by climate change; and developing a binding commitment to further reduce greenhouse gas emissions after the expiry of the Kyoto Protocol's first commitment period. Many see this UNGA as building momentum for the December COP/MOP climate conference in Bali with the aim to conclude a new post-2012 climate agreement by the 2009 UN climate

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meeting in Copenhagen.
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